



Quarterly Report
NEPAL: INCREASING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 367-A-00-01-00129-00
January 1- March 31, 2002

I. SUMMARY

Women in Nepal are overwhelmingly underprivileged; they receive poor nutrition and have limited access to education and health care. The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) believes that political empowerment enables women to achieve access to better nutrition, education and medical services and can strengthen their ability to address issues such as the trafficking of women. Furthermore, the Institute believes that women's empowerment and political participation are essential to the development and strengthening of Nepal's fledgling democracy.

On September 25, 2001, with funding from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), NDI began a multifaceted, multi-party, 24-month training program in Nepal to increase the political participation and effectiveness of local women leaders and activists. Targeting women in up to ten districts (Banke, Bardia, Chitwan, Dang, Dhanusa, Nawalparasi, Saptari, Sarlahi, and Siraha), this program focuses on increasing the number and effectiveness of Nepali women running in local elections. In addition to training new candidates, this program supports incumbent women representatives in Nepal by building their leadership and governance capabilities.

This quarter, the Institute conducted a variety of activities including: 1) designing training materials; 2) opening an office in Chitwan; and 3) garnering support for the trainings and identifying program participants. NDI is successfully laying the groundwork to train women's candidates in ten districts. Unfortunately, the NDI office in Nepal received an email from an unknown source, which threatened the safety of staff. This threat led NDI, in consultation with the U.S. Embassy, to delay opening its Chitwan office until February 2002. Local elections were expected in the summer of 2002. Due to the state of emergency, the Election Commission has postponed calling elections. As a result, NDI is revising the timeline for this program. During the next quarter, NDI will compile the outcomes of the needs assessment, hold a training-of-trainers (TOT) for political party members and continue coordinating with local and international groups working on women's programming.

II. BACKGROUND

Political History

In March 1997, two months prior to local elections, an ordinance issued by the King of Nepal set aside 20 percent of local government posts for women. Women in Nepal have historically been underrepresented in government institutions, businesses, schools, and universities. In fact, before 1997, women had only 0.5 percent representation in local government. Although the King's ordinance resulted in the election of over 37,000 Nepali women to local office, as newcomers to politics, the women found themselves lacking the necessary knowledge, skills and information to carry out their job responsibilities. No government-sponsored orientation or training was provided to these new women officials. The newly elected women representatives were discouraged and their lack of knowledge about rules of local governance fueled arguments against the increased involvement of women in politics. In response to this gap in skills expressed by women, NDI began conducting training programs for women representatives.

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NDI's specific program objectives are to build the capacity of newly elected women representatives and second-termers to govern more effectively and to institutionalize training methodologies, materials, and activities within Nepali political parties and government agencies. The Institute will be placing particular emphasis on the ability of women representatives to monitor local development projects and to solicit funding for such efforts from both public funds and private revenues. These activities will be conducted with an emphasis on increasing transparency in spending at the local level of government.

Political Update

During this reporting period, there has been an increase in Maoist activities throughout the country, including threats and police arrests in several of the districts where NDI is working with women, namely Dang, Banke and Bardiya. On February 21, the House of Representatives ratified a motion to extend the state of emergency for three months, declared by the King in November 2001. The motion required two-thirds ratification and passed with 194 out of 205 votes, following the Maoists' massacre of nearly 140 government, army and police officials in the district of Achaam earlier that week. The extension of the state of emergency has impacted the timetable for local elections. These elections, which were initially anticipated for June, have been postponed and no specific date has been set as of yet. As a result, NDI is revising the timeline for the program in conjunction with USAID.

Following a tense month of Maoist activities throughout the country, Office Manager Sushmita Subba and WCT/WRT Program Manager Anamika Rai traveled to Chitwan to assess the political situation and meet with local staff. The Institute is paying meticulous attention to safety concerns and has been taking utmost caution following a curfew temporarily placed in Chitwan district. Following the visit, NDI staff concluded that program work will proceed from Chitwan. NDI will continue to monitor political activities in Chitwan and the selected training districts.

USAID Review

During this quarter and at the request of USAID, the Institute underwent an assessment of its accounting procedures. The review covered NDI procedures related to cost sharing, financial procurement, internal controls, vouchers, record keeping and organizational management. The Institute is awaiting a report from USAID containing their findings.

Coordination Efforts

NDI is working to coordinate efforts with donor organizations, INGOs, NGOs and government agencies to avoid donor overlap and to maximize programmatic outcomes among organizations working in the field of women's political development. NDI has held meetings with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Nepal Law Society, Canada-Nepal Gender Organizations (CNGO), the Enabling State Programme (ESP) and the Mainstreaming Gender Equity Programme (UNDP). NDI is also participating in the 'gender and governance coordination meetings' chaired by CARE/Nepal. These coordination efforts have already proved fruitful. In some districts, trainers from the Institute's former WRT program are likely to act as trainers for UNICEF's gender-related training programs. UNICEF is also considering duplicating NDI's women's program in other districts. Nepal Law Society and NDI are coordinating to maximize the number of women trained in each district while ensuring that each organization targets different Village Development Committees (VDCs) within the districts. CNGO gender resource persons are providing NDI with information on potential women candidates.

Monitoring and Evaluation

NDI submitted its monitoring and evaluation plan for the WCT/WRT program to USAID. The M and E, developed with feedback from NDI's citizen participation team and Asia Team, outlines a program for assessing NDI's WCT/WRT program. This monitoring and evaluation plan was reviewed by USAID and amended to include a greater focus on tracking women's budgeting and project funding skills. Evaluation and monitoring activities are already underway. Based on initial meetings with local representatives and women leaders, the Institute developed a "needs assessment" to track participants' level of knowledge about governance and campaigning. The Institute is beginning to conduct this needs assessment.

Visit to Washington

During March, Nepal Country Director Mark Wallem visited Washington, D.C. to meet with officials at USAID and the U.S. Department of State. During his meetings, Mark discussed

the women's candidate and representative training program. Wallem also held a brown bag discussion for participants in an NDI women's working group. Mark shared lessons learned from the current program and learned of other lessons from NDI's women's political participation programs conducted around the world

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Designing Training Materials

NDI held initial meetings with women leaders from all the major political parties to discuss the women's program and to solicit assistance in editing the training manual. The Institute formed a broad based working group of individuals from political parties, local government bodies and the Women' Ministry to work on the development of a campaign manual and foster inter-agency coordination on such efforts. Participants of the working group include senior representatives from the following groups: Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP), Nepal Women Association (Nepali Congress), Rastriya People's Party (RPP), All Nepal Women Association (UML), Association of District Development Committees of Nepal (ADDC/N), National Association of Village Development Committees in Nepal (NAVIN) and the Women's Wing of the Women, Children, and Social Welfare Ministry.

At a January 17 meeting, working group participants provided feedback on the 1997 "Women Can Win" campaign manual, suggesting that the content of the manual focus more on the roles and responsibilities of local representatives. Attendees suggested that the manual's title be changed and that the illustrations depict both men and women of diverse Nepali origins and castes, wearing different ethnic attire. NDI is integrating into the manual the edits and design changes suggested at the meeting. Once the manual is revised, NDI will again solicit additional feedback from working group participants.

NDI is gathering information from USAID representatives that have been documenting public and private revenue sources within Nepal that are available for local development projects. In several areas, the industries that run hydropower plants and the government agencies that manage national parks are required to provide a portion of their revenues to the local communities for development projects. The Institute will incorporate information about these available resources into its budget training module.

Opening NDI's Office in Chitwan

NDI has been working in Chitwan over the past months, but due to security concerns delayed formally opening an office. After a security assessment was conducted, NDI opened its Chitwan office on February 1, 2002. The Chitwan office will serve as a regional hub for all WCT/WRT program activities, as trainers and NDI staff travel to ten districts in the terai. NDI staff met with local government officials and women leaders in Chitwan to inform them of our program and garner their support.

Garnering Support for the Trainings and Identifying Program Participants

NDI staff conducted field visits to 5 of the 10 districts targeted in the Institute's WCT/WRT program. Country Director Mark Wallem and WCT/WRT Program Manager Anamika Rai traveled to Chitwan, Sirlahi and Dhanusa, while Program Evaluator Rupak Magar,

District Coordinator Malati Shrestha and Program Assistant Tara Dawson McGuinness traveled to Chitwan, Sarlahi and Saptari. The two teams met with District Development Committee (DDC) Chairs and other DDC representatives to inform them of NDI's activities and to solicit feedback on the district's political situation. Both NDI teams held meetings with district level women leaders and leaders from all political parties to discuss each party's ticketing and candidate selection process as well as NDI's training-of-trainers (TOT) program.

These meetings revealed strong support for NDI's candidates/incumbent training program. Party leaders indicated that they would run incumbent women representatives for second terms and solicited NDI's help in training both incumbent and new women leaders. The political parties agreed to submit to the Institute the names of the women who will serve as political party campaign trainers. During the field visits, the Institute staff met several women previously trained by NDI who indicated that they would be running for re-election. Some women mentioned their interest in running for higher positions if the political parties provide them tickets.

NDI staff have been working to compile the names of the women who were elected in NDI targeted districts in 1997. The Institute is also identifying their political affiliations and their ward and village development committees. This information will not only be useful in tracking the number of women representatives who are running during the next elections, but it will also help NDI to identify participants for the training program. These lists have been compiled and are being translated into English.

At a conference organized by the National Association of Village Development Committees in Nepal (NAVIN), NDI staff met with women representatives from NDI's targeted districts. Women representatives from Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Dhanusha, Saptari, and Sirlahi attended. During these discussions, NDI staff informed the women of the Institute's training program and the women provided NDI with insights into the current political situation in their districts.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Objective 1: To increase the number of women candidates running both as incumbents and for the first time, and to increase the number of women representatives elected in the 2002 ward and VDC elections;

Objective 2: To build the capacity of newly elected women representatives and second-termers to govern more effectively;

Objective 3: To promote sustainable women's political participation in Nepal; and

Objective 4: To build the capacity of Nepalis, and Nepal's political parties and government bodies to facilitate, recruit, train and develop women candidates and representatives.

- Political parties are demonstrating support for candidate training through selecting women members to participate in the TOT.
- The Institute is successfully coordinating with other local groups to find ways of improving the effectiveness of each organization's activities.
- Political party members and representatives from local government umbrella organizations participated in the process of developing training materials. Leaders from all the political parties, the Women, Children and Social Welfare Ministry, NAVIN and ADDC/N studied the manual and consulted with their respective organizations for feedback. This working group, made up of political party members and government organizations, provided constructive criticism for reworking the manual. These individuals will be given a final review of the revised campaign manual.

V. EVALUATION

NDI is taking important steps to engage local stakeholders in all aspects of the program development process. Through the manual revision process and in program planning conversations, political parties and local government bodies are gaining experience in developing training materials and gaining knowledge about women's candidate training programs. In addition, other local and international groups are considering duplicating NDI's training program in additional districts. In this way, NDI's program is having an impact outside of NDI's ten targeted districts. NDI is also laying the groundwork for conducting the TOT. The Institute is identifying women for the upcoming trainings, soliciting the support of local political parties and initiating a needs assessment.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

In the upcoming months, NDI will continue implementing and compiling the results of the needs assessment of incumbent and first-time candidates. Based on the findings of this assessment, the Institute will revise the training curriculum. NDI will also continue to update the campaign manual and conduct follow-up coordination efforts with organizations working on women programming. In addition, NDI will also conduct a TOT for political party trainers. NDI will, in conjunction with USAID, revise its timeline as needed.